THE SECOND DAY.

The 23rd October, 1905.

The Assembly met in the Victoria Jubilee Town Hall at 12 noon on Monday, the 23rd October.

The Dewan presided and the Heads of Departments and other Officers were present.

The Memoranda of representations and suggestions previously prepared and forwarded by the members were taken up.

SUBJECTS.

1. Extension of the Railway.

Mr. S. Swamy Aiyengar (Member, Merchants of Trivandrum) suggested that the Quilon Railway should be extended to Trivandrum and thence to the Southern frontier and said that the extension would connect the trade-centres and be highly beneficial to merchants and travellers.

Mr. Atchuthan Pillai (Member, Alengad Taluk) urged the importance of connecting Alwaye with Trivandrum by Railway and suggested that the enormous wealth hoarded in the temples might be utilized for the project. He observed that, with the many harbours on the coast and with the magnificent planting industry on the High Ranges, the undertaking would prove profitable.

Mr. Krishnan Pandala (Member, Quilon Taluk) in supporting the previous speakers said that the Quilon Railway ran through forests and comparatively uninhabited tracts and that it would be more profitable to extend the Railway to the populous and commercial centres near the sea.

Mr. S. Subramony Aiyer (Member, Town Improvement Committee, Nagercoil) said that, since the opening of the Quilon-Tinnevelly Railway, the important trading centres of Kottar and Vataseri had suffered much and that the extension of the Railway into the Southern Division would remove the inconveniences and difficulties of the merchants and the people. The Railway would also help in developing the harbour at Cape Comorin.

Dewan's reply.—The representations will receive due consideration. The Chief Engineer thinks that a Railway to the Southern frontier will be useful and will also pay. Traffic is being registered with a view to form an idea of the profitableness of the proposed extension.

2. Abolition or reduction of tax on firewood.

Mr. S. Subramony Aiyer (Member, Town Improvement Committee, Nagercoil) said that the tax of one rupee per

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SUBJECTS.

ton levied on firewood taken from Reserved forests pressed hard on the people and requested that the tax might be abolished or at least reduced. He explained that the procedure laid down in the Forest Department in regard to the cutting and removal of firewood entailed much delay and expense to the people, that altogether they had to pay six rupees for every two rupees' worth of firewood and that the people had no option but to buy it at any price as there were no unreserved forests close to the villages from which fuel could be taken.

Dewan's reply.—It is proper that a fee should be levied on firewood taken from Reserved forests. The question of reducing the fee, however, will be considered.

3. *Separation of the Devaswom from the Revenue Department.*

Mr. A.D. Arumanayagom (Member, South Travancore Native Christian Association, Nagercoil) requested that the Devaswoms might be separated from the Revenue Department with a view to the more efficient administration of the two Departments and also to throw open the latter Department to all classes of His Highness' subjects.

Mr. S. Padmanabha Pillai (Member, Karunagapalli Taluk) supported the request and said that the Hindus too had a grievance in the matter. They were not satisfied with the management of the temples such as it was. Low-paid subordinates who had to deposit heavy cash securities managed the Devaswom affairs, and fraud and peculation were the result. The *padivu* or scale of expenditure for the several temples was fixed about 90 years ago and all along it had continued unchanged, although the prices of the several articles entered had steadily risen since then. In several of the temples, the *pujas* and other daily and monthly ceremonies were being perfunctorily performed. The Hindus had a grievance in things being thus mismanaged. It was they that had established many of the Devaswoms and endowed them with large properties and naturally they were anxious as to the future of the Devaswoms. The Government was but a trustee in respect of those institutions. In conclusion, he said that the people were thankful to the present Administration for bestowing so much attention on Devaswom affairs and for the steps already taken to remove the uncertainties and irregularities connected with purificatory ceremonies, and requested that Government might be further pleased to separate and thoroughly reform the Devaswom Department and place it on a satisfactory footing.

Dewan's reply.—The subject is engaging the attention of Government. The suggestions made are good and will be considered.

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